

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 057 627

EM 009 488

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 TITLE The Planning of a Communications Coalition for Educational Change. Final Progress Report.
 INSTITUTION National Foundation for the Improvement of Education, Washington, D.C.
 SPONS AGENCY National Center for Educational Communication (DHEW/OE), Washington, D.C.
 BUREAU NO BR-1-3027
 PUB DATE Dec 71
 GRANT OEG-0-71-3952
 NOTE 110p.
 EDRS PRICE MF-\$0.65 HC-\$6.58
 DESCRIPTORS Audiences; *Communication (Thought Transfer); Communication Problems; Communications; Community Involvement; *Educational Change; *Feasibility Studies; Information Dissemination; Information Networks; Mass Media; Publicize; Telecommunication
 IDENTIFIERS *Communications Coalition

ABSTRACT

To overcome communications failures which tend to impede useful educational change and to achieve the goal of an educationally informed public, the feasibility of a Communications Coalition was investigated. Two other long term goals were identified: to promote a national concern for educational change and to design a system which would be effective and self-supporting. The first part of this report describes short term goals, such as analyzing existing communications systems, defining various public audiences, ascertaining which communication devices work best with a particular audience, and developing methods for optimum collaboration with other agencies. The next section discusses developmental projects designed to provide empirical evidence. The major communications media are described in an approach consisting of five steps: identify existing communication systems, evaluate them, identify important target audiences, determine their weaknesses, and identify major communication gaps. As a prelude to the formulation of a plan for the Coalition, existing communication failures are analyzed from the point of view of the community and of the professionals. The last sections present derived theoretical constructs, goals for the Coalition, and an organization of these goals into clusters of discrete activities. (SH)

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BR 1-3027
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Final Progress Report

Project No. 1-3027
Grant of Contract No. OEG-0-71-3952

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The Planning of a Communications Coalition
for Educational Change

Louis J. Rubin

Communications Coalition
for Educational Change

In collaboration with the

National Foundation for the Improvement of Education

Washington, D.C.

December 1971

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE

Office of Education
National Center for Educational
Communication

EM 009 488

Final Progress Report

Project No. 1-0327
Grant No. OEG-0-71-3952

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for Educational Change
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THE PLANNING OF A COMMUNICATIONS COALITION
FOR EDUCATIONAL CHANGE

December 1971

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE

Office of Education

National Center for Educational
Communication

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I. Introduction

The building of a new organization is, in many ways, like a journey into the unknown. One cannot predict what lies ahead, whether or not the destination will be reached, or what obstacles and impediments may be encountered along the way.

Despite this uncertainty, beginning organization tend to benefit from a little planned parenthood. Rate of growth, for example, is a matter which must be deliberated carefully. Incentive to create must be pondered, the capacity to nurture must be assessed, the willingness to undergo the inevitable strains and stresses must be considered, and the probable benefits must be estimated.

The pages which follow represent the final report on a planning grant from the National Center for Educational Communication. They tell the story of such deliberations. The subject was to determine whether there should be a Communications Coalition for Educational Change. Six months of planning have now occurred. The time has been devoted to a searching out of answers to several critical questions: What communication goals are of most worth? How can they most effectively be accomplished? What pursuits should be undertaken, in what order? And, with respect to the most critical question of all, in an already overcrowded communications environment, is there room for the Coalition to take root and thrive?

The planning was based upon several preliminary assumptions: first, educating the citizenry about education is a crucial requirement; second, various forms of communications failure currently inhibit such education; third, significant lapses exist within the communications enterprise itself; that is, large segments of the population presently remain untouched by activities intended to inform the general public. Using these assumptions as a point of departure, the Coalition staff began its planning work. We wished to test the validity of the assumptions, to explore potential correctives, to identify occupational impediments and other constraints, and ultimately to predict survival potential.

We organized ourselves by setting some short-term goals, some long-term goals, some developmental activities, and some theoretical explorations. As short-term goals, for example, we analyzed existing communications systems, defined the various audiences which utilized educational information, tested the degree of cooperation which could be won with existing communications agencies, projected operational budgets, researched their feasibility, and so on. With respect to the long-term goals, we gave thought to the design of a communication network, the creation of an administrative and policy-making structure for the Coalition, the prompting of national concern for educational problems, and the initiation of programs which would result in an

educationally informed public. These efforts, we reasoned, would require two pragmatic operations. One can learn from the lessons of the past by examining theoretical insights derived from sound research, and one can learn from trial and error by attacking problems on one's own. We did both. We launched a series of modest projects in Jacksonville, Dayton, Baltimore, and Chicago, among others, and we painstakingly examined the anatomy of healthy and unhealthy communication procedures.

Finally, since we knew that the Coalition would need to be self-supporting, we devoted some attention to the practical matters of cash-flow and sustaining income. We investigated probable markets, production costs, distribution costs, copyright provisions, and similar aspects of business management. The fruits of these variable labors are described in the pages which follow. At the outset, the short-term and long-term goals are each described. Next, each of the developmental projects is summarized, and the interim conclusions are synthesized. These conclusions are then given order and meaning through fusion with a variety of research findings: in short, the lessons from the field and the lessons from scholarship are integrated into a set of theoretical constructs. Lastly, a plan for a Coalition setting forth purpose, membership, method of operation, representative projects, projected growth rates, and life-style are presented.

II. A Vision: The Long-Term Goals

The birth of an organization, if properly planned, must encompass a vision of the future. The Coalition's architects were impelled by such a vision. Its founders were convinced that public involvement in educational decision-making was an inevitable fact of life in the period ahead. Indeed, it is already apparent that the public has a will which it intends to exercise: bond issues have failed, promising new curricula have been rejected, programs of school integration have been overthrown, plans for the busing of children have been endorsed or refuted -- all because people have strong convictions about the kinds of schools their children should attend. It is self-evident, therefore, that an informed citizenry is crucial, and that the public's flagging confidence in its schools is not likely to be restored until people understand what schools can and must do, and why. As matters presently stand, there is little question but that needed change in the educational enterprise is being impeded by hesitancy, uncertainty, and outright opposition on the part of taxpayers.

The research relating to public attitude and belief suggests that the problem is largely related to communications failure. People are unaware of available new alternatives, or unable to distinguish between momentary fashions and authentic improvements, or fearful of the unfamiliar, or

unwilling to accept the inevitability of social evolution. In each of these situations, however, the corrective depends upon better communications -- going beyond the mere transmission of information to the deeper goals of reflection, reason, and the impulse to act.

The predominant goal of the organization, consequently, was clear from the outset: to overcome communications failures which tend to impede useful educational change. In short, the organization was to educate people about education -- and to do so with candor and unremitting integrity. This process of informing people, the architects believed, was an indispensable element in promoting harmonious social change.

The Coalition was to be established as a non-profit organization, and designed to serve the public good. It was to draw its membership from representative educational agencies, the media industry, and communications networks whose clients included one or more of education's many publics. Five agencies served as the initial sponsors: The United States Office of Education, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, the Kettering Foundation, the National Education Association, and Curriculum Development Associates, Inc.

Out of the overriding goal -- achieving an educationally informed public -- three other long-term ambitions developed. To begin with, an ancient communications principle holds

that meaningful information is difficult to transmit to a disinterested audience. Thus, it was essential that a second goal be that of promoting a national concern for educational change. This concern, moreover, needed to begin with dialogues of many shapes and forms, and to end in a concrete desire to act. In turn, this second goal prompted a third: the design of a communication system which would respect several indispensable conditions: the system must not compete but work cooperatively with the existing communications networks; it must deal with the significant rather than the trivial; it must reach audiences which currently were not reached due to communication lapses; and it must transmit information in easily-understood forms, and through convenient mass media. Finally, assuming that an effective communications system could be designed, it would be necessary to create an administrative and policy-making structure, an operational scheme which would make it possible for the Coalition to pursue its objectives on a permanent basis, and to ensure its own self-support.

Viewed in the large, the vision was an ambitious one. A new organization was to be created. It would seek to perpetuate useful educational change through achieving an educationally informed public, and, through the value of its services, it would pay its own way. Working carefully, and soliciting the cooperative collaboration of the various

communication networks, the organization would design an information system which would overcome fragmentation, fill existing voids, and identify and meet the public's information needs as new educational problems emerged. Underlying all its efforts, there would be a continuous attempt to involve the citizenry in the problems of its educational institutions, promoting a meaningful analysis of the issues, and prompting rational action. Out of all this would come the primary accomplishment -- an educationally informed public.

III. In the Beginning: The Short-Term Goals

The difference between an impossible dream and a realizable goal lies in the hard test of reality. Accordingly, the Coalition's architects were mindful of the need for a practical approach. Only by engaging in a carefully sequenced series of interim sub-goals could the Coalition determine whether its long-term goals were a hopeless mirage or a feasible reality. Four tasks were therefore set as the essential work of the first six months.

First, it would be necessary to analyze the existing communications systems. What were their strengths and weaknesses? What sorts of activities lent themselves to greater collaborative effort? And, perhaps of greatest importance, what were the vital communication procedures which bridged the gap between "knowing about a problem" and "acting to achieve its solution."

Second, it would be necessary to define the various public audiences. How did the communication needs of legislators differ from those of other taxpayers? Did urban communities respond to different communications devices than rural ones? Did race and class play a role in determining effective communications activities? Under what conditions was one medium preferable to another? Above all, who were the definitive consumers of educational information

and what knowledge did they each consider to be of most worth?

Third, it was necessary to ascertain which communication devices worked best with which particular audience. Which social groups were most comfortable with printed information and which preferred television? What were the comparative advantages of newspapers and radio discussion programs? Would there be any perceptible benefit to re-establishing a contemporary version of the old town-hall meetings, taking full advantage of the modifications which modern communications technology afforded, and encouraging people to take a more active interest in public education?

Four, it was necessary to flesh out the Coalition's relationship with existing communications agencies and educational organizations. How, in short, could the Coalition best collaborate and function? Similarly, with respect to its administrative and policy-making structure, answers were needed for a number of other questions: How large should the Coalition be? What would be an appropriate minimum budget for continued existence? What would be the most effective method of determining the most rational priority of communication problems? What sorts of advisory panels should be constituted, and how could representative representation be achieved? What potential would there be in multi-media "packages" designed for use with citizens'

discussion groups? How much attention should be given to practical considerations such as copyright provisions and relationship with established production centers? How could a non-profit organization best produce revenue which would guarantee self-support? To what extent would charitable foundations be willing to underwrite "high-risk" communication experiments? These and other questions constituted a kind of investigative blueprint, detailing the early planning activities.

These four necessities, each representing an important practical requirement in its own right, thus constituted the framework of the short-term goals. Together with the developmental activities, described in the section which follows, they created the criteria against which the Coalition's usefulness and life style could be gauged.

IV. First Steps: Developmental Activities

The Coalition has now completed its first 180 days. In view of our short-term and long-term goals, we reasoned that, during the first six months, it would be most profitable to explore the prognosis for our future on a multi-lateral front. We wished, for example, to undertake some developmental activities in order to test our operational muscle. In addition, we needed to learn something about existing communication failures in order to determine whether or not the Coalition might make an ultimate contribution to an already cluttered environment. Thirdly, since nothing is so practical as a sound theory, we needed to identify some theoretical constructs which might guide us in the period ahead. And, beyond all of the foregoing, we needed to initiate some organizing explorations in order to ascertain whether or not an alliance between the producers, disseminators, and the consumers of educational information was feasible. Finally, we needed a plan which would project the Coalition's operation.

In pursuing these diverse needs, we thought it politic to approach the problems from different vantage points, building in a deliberate overload of data, so that we might compare our findings and flush out any contradictions between theory and practice. We therefore programmed three overlapping

procedures, each intended to get at the same questions. We first launched a series of developmental activities, to provide some empirical evidence; next, we launched an analysis of the existing research data, so that we could obtain clues to pervasive communication failures; lastly, we took a hard analytical look at the major communications media -- the Coalition's ultimate weapon -- to learn more about the relative advantages and disadvantages of each medium. Through such a multi-lateral approach, we hoped to avoid misconceptions stemming from insufficient evidence.

The five developmental projects are described below, and the description of the major communications media and the analysis of pervasive communications failures are described in the succeeding two sections.

1. Jacksonville

In the first of our developmental activities, we have launched plans for a "feedback project" in Jacksonville, Florida.

Two-way communication is a relatively new phenomenon in information transmission. Somewhat better known in the television industry, it remains virtually ignored as a device for clarifying misunderstandings regarding the educational process. Although educational institutions

have devoted a vast amount of attention to conveying the desirability of innovations, little attempt has been made to solicit or interpret the public's reaction. Moreover, since there really is no educational public, but rather a conglomeration of disparate publics, much of the current educational crisis stems from people's inability to understand or tolerate conflicting ideologies. Thus, two major problems exist: first, because of faulty communication, the schools are somewhat unresponsive to community expectations; and second, the general citizenry does not recognize the widely divergent demands which different social groups place upon their schools.

Similarly, controversies regarding the public schools have been nurtured by a gross absence of person-to-person exchange. Despite the spectacular gains which have been made in communications technology and in the quality of radio, print, and television products, person-to-person communication remains, by far and away, the most effective means of influencing public attitude, belief, and opinion. Healthy human interaction is of necessity a two-way process, feed-back is indispensable, and the opportunity to clarify and probe for deeper meaning must be present. Since different people respond differently to messages, in one-way communication the danger of misperception is infinitely greater than in a two-way interchange. In addition, most

communications have an infectious character; that is, the original sender delivers a message to a receiver -- who then transmits (and perhaps misinterprets) the message to others with whom he interacts. The probabilities of misunderstanding and misconception therefore increase substantially.

Within the last year, WJCT, a public television station in Jacksonville, has developed an imaginative new approach to two-way communication. In effect, the development of "mobile units" makes it possible to carry on two-way, person-to-person communication with exceedingly large numbers of people. Though technologically impressive, the method is simple: small vans containing camera and sound equipment are dispatched to various parts of the city. Televising capability is established in a church, a back yard, or a jail. People congregated in these areas are therefore able to monitor and respond to discussions emanating from the central station. In this fashion, it is possible to literally broadcast a town hall meeting, and to involve several hundred people simultaneously in a two-way, three-way, or ten-way dialogue. The spectacular advantage of the strategy, obviously, is that many of the communications disabilities, referred to above, are corrected.

The Communications Coalition for Educational Change recognizes the potential inherent in the Jacksonville procedure, and proposes to extend its usefulness as a communication vehicle for participatory democracy.

Concomitantly, the proposed project will help meet the need for a rational understanding of educational problems, promote greater cooperation among public television stations, and develop an imaginative new use of the television media. With respect to the public at large, the project will alert parents to some of the more pressing problems of education, perpetuate a more informed public -- increasing the likelihood of intelligent local control, illuminate differences in public opinion, and focus national attention on the pluralistic aspirations of different groups of Americans.

Project Design

The Coalition will undertake pre-production research, coordination, and supervision of four community feedback programs. These will deal with such issues as the following:

- (1) Alternative Ways of Financing Schooling.
- (2) The Desirability of the All-Year School.
- (3) The Pros and Cons of Community Control.
- (4) Proper Limitations on Student Freedom.

Each program will be produced (initially) at station WJCT in Jacksonville. The production format for each will be the same. Three nationally-recognized experts on the issue will be brought to the Jacksonville station. In a discussion, moderated by a local host, they will air conflicting expert points of view on the issue. Audience

feedback, emanating from the WJCT studio as well as from various points in the city and reflecting different sub-cultures, will then be initiated. The dialogues among the experts and the community will be pursued for a period of three to four hours. Jacksonville, Florida, is a large metropolitan area and great care will be taken to involve representative citizens who constitute a good cross-section of political and educational beliefs, reflective not merely of the South but of the nation as a whole.

Following the community feedback programs, the resulting video tapes will be edited extensively. Two products will be derived from this editing:

- (1) A one-hour film, synthesizing the gist of the dialogues, which can be broadcast and viewed elsewhere; and
- (2) An edited sequence of clips, based upon the experts' points of view, which can be used to stimulate similar community dialogues in other public television programs throughout the nation.

Twenty copies of the one-hour film will be produced and made available for secondary broadcast. These should be most useful at school board meetings, PTA conferences, training sessions designed to familiarize school administrators with points of public concern, and so on. Additionally, they can be broadcast by public and commercial television stations wherever interest exists and rights can be established. Inasmuch as the Coalition is an alliance of educational

organizations and media networks, it is in an excellent position to insure widespread dissemination of the films.

Ten copies of the sequenced clips, based upon the experts' testimony, will also be produced. These will be used in ten selected cities to generate additional community dialogue.

In short, it is anticipated that other public television stations, using a format of their choice, can deploy the clips without charge as a means of sponsoring the educational involvement of citizens in their own locale. Local school leaders could be asked to respond to the convictions espoused by the experts, citizens groups might be asked, in group discussion, to participate in a broadcast criticizing the ideas, and so on. The particular choice of format is not crucial; the primary objectives are to (a) focus local community attention on a major educational problem, (b) gain secondary benefit from money invested in obtaining expert testimony, and (c) promote greater and more rational community involvement in educational decision-making.

It is our belief that the project is of mutual benefit to the public television industry, public education, and the general citizenry. For the industry, a relatively dramatic new device can be put into widespread use; for public education, community attention can be focused upon four significant, if not crucial dilemmas; and for citizens, local

control and participatory democracy become somewhat more realistic and viable.

2. Baltimore

A second project, somewhat less well-developed, is being undertaken with a public television station in Baltimore, Maryland. The Coalition will join with the NEA and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting in the production of a television program on student rights. The program will treat a highly controversial and exceedingly delicate issue: the civil rights of students and teachers within a public-supported institution.

Schools traditionally are charged with the social orientation of youth. Accordingly, they set policies which not only can make for efficient operation, but can impinge upon the civil liberties of students, teachers, and administrators. The length of a student's hair, the right of a teacher to drink in public, and the prerogative of a school principal to propagandize for a political cause of his choice: all serve as examples of educational policies which curtail the human rights of people associated with the schools.

The revolt of minority groups, the press for greater civil liberties, and the increasing clamor on the part of youth for the right to participate in determining their own destiny, all bear upon the problem of student rights.

Moreover, parents themselves are divided on the issue of student autonomy and school authority. There are those who believe that the schools should set minimum standards of conduct and behavior, irrespective of the student's civil liberties, and there are those who believe that students are human beings as well as citizens and therefore entitled to the perquisites of citizenship.

Like many other issues involving schooling, the problem derives from the pluralistic system of values which currently characterize the society. These value conflicts being what they are, it is unlikely that the issue can be resolved agreeably to all parties concerned. A consensus position, effecting a reasonable compromise, however, would seem to be possible. In addition, we believe that there would be great benefit in clarifying the conflicting positions, familiarizing the general public with the nature of the dispute, and publicizing the position favored by most schools.

In the proposed venture, therefore, an attempt will be made to define the range of student rights within the secondary schools, to document the reasoning behind "needed curtailment," and to debate the advisability of more flexible -- or more rigid -- provisions. As in the case of the Jacksonville project, the Coalition plans extensive secondary use of the completed television program. After initial broadcast in Baltimore and elsewhere, we

plan to utilize a videotape or film of the program in spawning a variety of public discussions on the topic.

For example, the Coalition might generate a series of community-school dialogues which involve students, parents and school officials. In short, it is our hope that the television production can be reshaped into a communications device which will stimulate and encourage such dialogue. In this fashion, we hope to assess the possibility of combatting a chronic communications problem in education: people tend to magnify specific criticisms -- high taxes, sex education, a losing football team, "permissive" attitudes toward students -- into a generalized negative attitude. It may be that by attacking public concerns, even on trivial matters, we may do much to counteract an unfounded sense of malaise.

3. Chicago

In Chicago, a project on environmental education is under way. As in our other developmental activities, our purposes are multiple.

We are seeking, for example, further experience in cooperative endeavors with a media network. The project, dealing with environmental education, is being carried on in conjunction with station WTTW. A coordinated sequence of television programs will be produced, aimed simultaneously

at three distinct audiences: children, parents, and teachers. The point is to determine whether the benefits of instructional television are enhanced when there are parallel efforts to inform parents and retrain teachers. Educational documentaries on ecology, geared for the junior high school student, will be matched with public television offerings aimed at parents and shown in prime time. In turn, a related series of teacher training programs, broadcast during the school day, will also be produced, in the hope that such a synchronized procedure will demonstrate considerable advantage over present practices.

In addition, since the public's expectations of their schools tend to shift from time to time, we are anxious to learn whether curricular innovations, based upon current social problems, are well-received. A considerable body of communications research indicates that the parents who are most knowledgeable about schools, and those who, in one way or another, have profited from education, generally manifest a more favorable attitude toward public education. We would like, consequently, to verify this hypothesis by assessing the impact of the sequenced series on public opinion; once completed, we intend to use the programs in a number of geographical regions elsewhere in the country to test their effect on public attitudes.

Still another purpose has to do with the possibilities of cross-fertilizing communication messages. As things now stand, potent educational information periodically appears in newspapers, radio broadcasts, and television programs. There is, however, no organized attempt to see that information disseminated through one medium is also communicated through other networks. As a result, people who rely upon newspapers for their news may miss important ideas which are broadcast only on television, and those who rely upon the radio may miss communication messages which appear only in the newspapers. Following the completion of the WTTW environmental education series, we hope to convert the substantive information to radio and press formats, and to investigate the consequences of multiple dissemination activities.

4. Dayton

In another facet of its planning activities, the Coalition has undertaken a major communications study in the city of Dayton, Ohio.

Little is known about the mechanisms of informal communications within the sub-cultures of a community; even less is known about the relationships between such informal information exchanges and the more formal use of mass media. The study therefore seemed an essential prerequisite to future Coalition operations.

Several reasons support the selection of Dayton: first, the city is large enough to reflect the kinds of urban problems characteristic of the nation's largest cities, yet small enough to make a depth survey manageable. Second, Dayton is in the midst of an educational crisis, based largely upon conflicting objectives of various subcultures; thus fundamental educational issues are being actively aired and debated. Third, Dayton is one of several American cities which maintains an ombudsman's office at civic expense, and this ombudsman's office has expressed a keen desire to cooperate in the survey. Fourth, Dayton possesses a number of research agencies, each of which could contribute to the survey. And fifth, because of Dayton's population mix of differing American opinions and values in the 1970's, a communications survey in Dayton would likely yield greater profit than one in a sociologically less interesting city.

This survey of a prototype community -- an effort to gain a better understanding of informal human communication and the etiology of educational attitudes and beliefs -- is prompted in the main by our lack of understanding regarding these phenomena. We know that people's values and beliefs play a major part in determining the kinds of behavior they choose to act out. The informal communications which shape these attitudes and beliefs may, in the end, have greater

consequence than the more formalized communications of the mass media.

Dayton is an almost classical example of a city divided by public allegiance to competing educational ideology. There are at least four different educational publics in Dayton: one consists of a large black community with its own special educational values and aspirations; one is a lower-middle class white community, politically conservative as well as strongly opposed to the present system and to any further educational change; one, an affluent middle and upper-middle class, generally satisfied with the present condition of the schools; and one, an affluent middle class that strongly favors rapid educational change and increased emphasis upon humanistic educational objectives.

The present school board is strongly divided, with a four-three split. The two factions tend to vote as blocs, the conservative faction now having a majority of one. The majority group, heavily opposed to the present school administration, recently captured the decisive fourth seat in the November election. It is still uncertain whether the present school superintendent will stay, resign, or be dismissed. The liberal bloc, out of power but two weeks, is already marshalling its forces for the next voting contest.

Political lines are sharply drawn and seemingly ineradicable. The ideological conflicts are so deeply etched in public thinking that Dayton has never been able .

to mount a sustained junior high school program -- largely because some of the conservative groups of the community are convinced that such middle-schools represent a "first step toward communism." All in all, there is a rare opportunity to study public values and beliefs in the context of an actual political crisis.

Briefly stated, the Coalition's survey, utilizing a controlled-study design, will seek the answers to four questions:

1. What educational beliefs and aspirations do each of Dayton's sub-cultures have for their schools?
2. Through what communication channels were these beliefs and aspirations derived?
3. Can each group's educational beliefs be altered through selected communication efforts?
4. If so, which communication procedures are most effective with each group?

We believe that if useful answers to these questions can be learned, the resulting implications will be applicable to virtually every other urban community in the United States. Hopefully, the study will also serve to verify or refute -- in the context of public education -- a number of generalizations from general communications theory.

The study is divided into three distinct phases.

These are:

Phase I: Public Opinion Survey

Here the study will attempt to obtain the answers to the first two questions above for each of the identifiable subcultures. In collaboration with Dayton's Public Opinion Survey Center and its ombudsman's office, the Coalition will test public opinion through the use of a standard set of survey techniques. However, in a somewhat unusual gambit, we intend to utilize a community self-study device. That is, rather than utilize trained interviewers, the study will allow private citizens to work with their sub-culture peers and to obtain the requisite survey data. This maneuver, of course, will present certain technical difficulties in controlling the validity of the data. Nonetheless, we believe that the contamination factors can be overcome, and that the probable advantages outweigh the disadvantages. The desirability of a community self-study is great enough that exploring its feasibility would be most worthwhile. Moreover, since there is little reason for the citizens to either camouflage or misrepresent their educational beliefs and expectations, a reasonable integrity of response can be presumed. Perhaps of greatest importance, the heavy involvement

of local citizens should serve to vitiate the fears, suspicions, and mistrust which normally arise when an outside group investigates a community's ideological convictions.

Phase II: Communication Activities (Informal)

Once at least partial answers to the first two survey questions are available, a variety of communication activities will be deployed in order to solicit answers to questions #3 and #4. During Phase II, Dayton's ombudsman's office will again be heavily relied upon; we anticipate that staff personnel will organize and supervise a variety of informal communication activities. Phase II will again emphasize the crucial importance of citizen involvement. We propose, in short, to allow Dayton citizens, in each of the four identified social groups, to select both the issues they wish to consider and their preferred method of communication. For example, it is likely that the residents of East Dayton will wish to communicate their concerns about sex education to school officials. Furthermore, it is probable that they will prefer a series of face-to-face dialogues with administrators to other communication devices. Accordingly, in Phase II, such interchange will be made possible.

During Phase II, also, the Coalition will test the efficacy of several attitude-changing devices. Using procedures devised by Rokeach and others, we will attempt -- in the course of these informal communication activities -- to generate "cognitive dissonance." In other words, we will attempt to draw people's attention to conflicts between their own expressed values and those of others they admire, or to illuminate conflicts between several of their own expressed values. It may be possible, in this way, to determine whether informal communication activities can be used not only to serve the normal goals of communication, but to modify attitudes and values as well.

The choice of specific communication activities to be used will depend, in large measure, upon the information preferences of each social group. It is anticipated, however, that these activities will include formal communication procedures, discussions which preface community action programs, person-to-person conversations at picnics, parties, church socials, and various other human interaction procedures.

It is widely held, in communication theory, that the public's understanding of education is best advanced by focusing "messages" on key citizens

who serve as opinion leaders. These leaders, it is believed, are extremely influential in shaping the attitudes of their followers. Whether or not these assumptions are true, particularly in the case of people's educational aspirations for their young, is something we hope to learn.

The quality of the study will be heavily dependent upon the Coalition's ability to deal with tangible issues. Apart from the obvious need for some common reference points, it is essential that we learn, if at all possible, more about the different brands of conventional wisdom which separate the public's beliefs about education. In this connection, it is also of great importance to investigate the kinds of educational values people assign to their neighbors and political antagonists. There is good reason to believe, for example, that many presumed educational disputes among social groups are based not on educational issues at all, but rather on a contest for political power.

Because of the great complexity of elements with which we wish to concern ourselves, it will be essential to utilize a simple research design that makes use of as many pre-post controls as possible. Moreover, because of the substantial

technical difficulties posed by the use of citizens as interviewers, it seems wise to treat the investigation as an exploration intended to yield promising leads for subsequent, more scientifically precise, studies. For the present purpose, the major benefit appears to lie in a general consideration of a number of different variables rather than in a narrow focus on one or two. To illustrate, we might wish to gather data, mid-stream, on differences in educational beliefs which might exist among different occupational groups. A rigidly structured design, using a variety of controls and counter-controls, would prohibit such a maneuver.

Phase III: Communication Activities (Formal)

In addition to the survey to be performed in Phase I, wherein specific educational beliefs and expectations are identified, and the initiation of informal communications activities projected for Phase II, the Coalition will assess the impact of Dayton's other, more conventional communications system of mass media. The city has several radio stations, two newspapers, commercial television stations, and plans for a contemplated educational television station. Moreover, Dayton has distinguished itself through its thorough

planning for the eventual development of cable television facilities. Not yet available, they give promise of being among the most carefully designed and effective in the nation.

During Phase III, overlapping the latter stages of Phase II, the Coalition will launch a series of communications activities utilizing the mass media. There are two purposes to these activities. First, we are anxious to compare the relative benefits of formal (mass media) communications devices with those derived from the more informal (two-way) dialogues. Second we believe that the results of the Dayton public's self-study, disseminated via the mass media, will greatly facilitate the city's desire to resolve the political crisis which now characterizes the disputed issues.

Finally, we are optimistic about the possibilities of analyzing the political machinations, and their communicative overtones, that will inevitably follow the November election. It is possible that the Dayton study will shed new light on the politics of school control and the inter-relationship between the public's political and educational ideologies.

5. Finance Paper

The last of our ongoing developmental activities deals with an effort to estimate the Coalition's potential for informing the public on a significant issue. The problem is a significant one because it strikes at the very heart of the Coalition's work style. The research on mass communication has repeatedly demonstrated that people seem to prefer editorialized messages to objective, non-partisan ones. What this means, obviously, is that people prefer communications which advocate a particular point of view. By comparing the arguments of different advocates, they eventually form a position themselves.

The Coalition's inception, however, was based in large measure upon an abiding faith in the citizenry's ability to make intelligent use of objective statements of fact. We believe, in short, that once people learn to analyze alternatives for themselves, the cause of participatory democracy is advanced. The best defense against manipulative propaganda, in other words, is a thinking public. We therefore wished to select an issue for objective analysis, to describe the problem and the available alternatives in easily understood language, to suggest the probable advantages and disadvantages of each alternative to the extent possible, and to disseminate the information as efficiently as circumstances permitted. Thus, we reasoned, we could

obtain badly needed evidence on a crucial plank in our campaign.

We selected, as the issue of greatest potential, the matter of financing the public schools. For reasons we do not yet fully understand, our society has never felt compelled to correct inequities in its method of financing the public schools. Many of the nation's affluent communities are able to support excellent schools on a comparatively low tax rate. Other districts, however, even under the duress of an exceedingly high tax rate, are unable to finance even passably acceptable schools for their children. It is not uncommon to find in a single state a range of \$150 per child to \$900 dollars per child in the amount people spend per year on the education of the young.

Recently, the California Supreme Court rendered a decision which held that California's present school financing system is unconstitutional because of inequities in schooling opportunity. Not only is the Serrano decision dramatic, but it is likely to have far-reaching consequences. Almost certainly, most other states will now feel obligated to re-examine their own school support structures, not only from the point of view of equitability but also from that of constitutionality. Some other states already have had suits filed against their school financing systems in the aftermath of the Serrano decision.

These circumstances make the issue of school finance an almost ideal case for the Coalition's purpose. It deals with a problem of practical concern to every taxpaying American, and with economic and legal principles that are not generally understood by the public-at-large. More, the financial support of the schools represents a topic that has been carefully researched for many years by academic scholars. As a consequence, there is a considerable amount of theoretical knowledge -- underscoring the alternative solutions to the problem which are at issue -- that could be translated into language comprehensible to the layman. And, because of the issue's extreme topicality, it is a fitting vehicle for the Coalition's exploratory purposes.

Accordingly, the Coalition is now at work on a statement of the issue. An already-completed preliminary draft has been subjected to initial critique, and it currently is being revised. Additional critiques and revisions are planned for the immediate future. As soon as the final version is at hand, we plan a widespread distribution of the statement.

Synthesizing the best of the available research, the issue statement treats several basic questions: (1) How much money should be spent on the public schools? (2) Where will the needed money come from? (3) How should the money be allocated among pupils and schools? (4) How can districts best utilize the available funds? (5) How should financial burdens be distributed among taxpayers?

The central objective of the statement is to define the actions open to the public as clearly and forthrightly as possible. Accordingly, a number of alternatives for the collection and distribution of school support funds are described. In addition, voucher plans, performance contracting, and other innovations regarding the utilization of funds are explored. To the extent that circumstances permit, experimental models and promising new practices, now ongoing in various parts of the country, are used as illustrations.

Apart from our fundamental desire to get an honest and badly needed statement to different educational audiences, we are intrigued by one further potential in the activity. Any issue concerning the amount of money people must yield from their personal incomes for the support of a public institution is likely to set loose an exceptional amount of controversy. Our knowledge regarding the relationship between communication and public controversy is scant. There is reason to believe, for example, that normal patterns of public communication are changed during periods of high controversy. As conflict over an issue mounts, for example, temporary citizens groups designed to press for a desired resolution may be created. As a result, new opinion leaders generally emerge, temporarily replacing established opinion leaders. In addition, and perhaps of greater moment, the

mass communications media may suffer a temporary decline in influence. Normally, for example, the mass media strive for balance between political extremes, attempting to deal fairly with both sides of an issue. During periods of violent controversy, however, people may find a balanced treatment of an issue inadequate; instead, they strongly prefer communications which reflect their particular bias. The net result, obviously, is the birth of ad hoc communication devices, and it is possible that these, temporarily, have greater influence on public opinion than the more permanent media.

It is our hope that as the finance issue is disseminated, we can learn a bit more about the peculiarities of the communication process during social controversy and political turmoil.

V. The State of the Art: Human Communication

In our examination of the major communications media and their use, we thought it wise to structure our efforts by adopting a five-phase procedure. In this way, we could guarantee reasonable comprehensiveness and a more efficient use of our manpower resources. Accordingly, the five steps were planned sequentially as follows:

1. *Identify the Existing Communication Systems and Networks*
2. *Evaluate These With View to Determining the Major Weaknesses*
3. *Identify the Important Target Audiences*
4. *Determine the Significant Weaknesses*
5. *Identify the Major Communication Gaps*

In short, we are trying to approach the problem of communication lapses from two points of departure: the demonstrable problems of existing systems and networks; and the misconceptions, misinformation, and unfulfilled information interests of target audiences. As an initial stratagem, the following target audiences or "education publics" were isolated:

1. *The Professionals:*
 - a. Superintendents, principals, supervisors, and school board members -- all of whom make educational policy
 - b. Teachers, paraprofessionals, aides -- who carry out policy

2. *The Community:*

- a. Parents who have children in school
- b. Taxpayers, who do not
- c. Particular social groups with a vested interest:
political conservatives and liberals; people
interested in the welfare of parochial schools;
blacks, Mexican-Americans and other minority
groups, and so on

3. *The Funders:*

- a. Local legislators
- b. State legislators
- c. Federal legislators
- d. Officials of philanthropic organizations
- e. Other agencies capable of influencing, or
controlling, the financial support of schools

4. *Opinion and Image Makers:*

Education reporters, editorial writers, free-lance authors, public figures who tend to speak on educational issues, and others with the power to influence public attitudes

5. *Students*

It is important to note, parenthetically, that in view of the way people interact within their social organizations, each of these groups is both a target audience and a vehicle for the dissemination of educational attitudes and values.

Eight discrete systems, each of which serves to communicate information about education, also were identified:

1. *The Press:*
 - a. Local newspapers
 - b. National circulation magazines
 - c. Other national printed communications
2. *Radio and Television:*
 - a. Locally produced programs
 - b. Nationally produced programs
 - c. Commercial television
 - d. Public television
 - e. Cable television
 - f. Locally produced radio programs
 - g. Nationally produced radio programs
3. *Interpersonal Contact Among:*
 - a. Children
 - b. Neighbors
 - c. Peers
4. *Interpersonal Contact Among School Personnel and:*
 - a. Other school personnel
 - b. Students
 - c. Other members of the community
5. *Public School Meetings and Programs*

6. *Printed Communications and Other Communication Messages Disseminated by Schools*
7. *Professional Education Journals*
8. *Professional Interaction at Educational Meetings and Conferences*

There is, of course, a substantial amount of overlap in the above categorization. However, for the purposes of analysis, we thought that some overcompartmentalization would not be undesirable. In order to perform the planned analysis, we are seeking answers to three crucial questions:

Which communication systems do each of the identified target audiences use?

Where multiple usage exists, which system appears to be most influential?

What communication inadequacies or dissatisfactions do members of the target audience perceive?

The Coalition discovered that:

1. Newspapers are the favorite source of school information for most people.
2. Word-of-mouth, or personal contact among neighbors, peers and children is the second most popular avenue of information.
3. Radio and television fall third or fourth, depending on the poll. Most people do not rely on the electronic media for education information.

4. Another kind of personal contact -- that which exists between the public and school personnel -- vied with radio and TV for third or fourth place among the top four favorite sources.

By studying the research data, the Coalition was able to determine which education audiences used which information systems. It found that, with some variation of degree, all audiences use the four methods listed above. But the larger question was -- why? Why do people pick newspapers first? Why is personal contact so popular? Why aren't radio and TV, with their widespread capabilities, relied on more?

These answers were more difficult to find. They are complicated by unassessable factors like personal need, motivation, convenience, prejudice, background, habit, and many other circumstances. What follows is an attempt to study the more formal systems by coordinating available research with authoritative speculation. No one has all the answers. The Coalition hopes it has produced some worthwhile ones, however.

A. Newspapers

The average American has probably twenty-five to thirty times as much mass media content available as he will use. How much does that American use the newspaper, his "favorite source."

According to Dr. Guido B. Stempel III (*Michigan Education Journal*, January, 1966), the most comprehensive studies of newspaper readership indicate that the average news article is read by one fifth of the readers. For articles about education the figure was somewhat below this -- at seventeen percent. There are some indications that the figure for small dailies and weeklies may run higher.

One reason people rely on newspapers is that they always have.

The local paper is familiar, habitual. It was a news source long before radio and television came on the scene. And it still has the look and "feel" of a news source: no-nonsense black and white, up and down columns blocked off by bold headlines and tight paragraphs. The newspaper wasn't and isn't what you dig into for laughs.

On the other hand, TV from its inception has been considered primarily an entertainment medium. There are news programs and documentaries, and they are watched. But the moon shot is a once-a-year event; the Beverly Hillbillies, Mission Impossible, and Johnny Carson are weekly, daily fare. So TV comes to mind first as a diversion to the majority of American people; not as a fund of educational information.

Radio's image is much like its electronic partner. We "catch the news on the hour" or "tune in" music. But the news is brief; the medium staccato. You get the headlines.

and the first paragraph, and that's it.

"The approach is now-you-hear-it, now-you-don't," says Mike Lenrow of the Public Opinion Center in Dayton, Ohio. The message doesn't linger around the house like your newspaper does. And with the electronic media, you have to pay attention and wait, not quite knowing when the story you want to hear will be told. Conversely, you read what you want, when you want, in your newspaper.

The electronic media's image is not deceptive. Stempel claims, for example, that "a radio station which devotes a total of two hours a day to news. . . is giving the equivalent of only three newspaper pages of news."

That brings us to the major differences between the press and its electronic competitors.

Space -- or news time to the air waves users -- is a commodity that newspapers have more of. Often space is tied to geography, giving papers a double-barreled advantage over radio and TV in covering education.

Newspapers proliferate. There are dailies, weeklies, shoppers; major city papers, suburban papers which even break down a suburb into neighborhoods.

Papers have the staff, news space and proximity to cover the local scene -- their "market" area -- and they use all these tools. In these matters, there are even varying capabilities among papers. A metropolitan newspaper serving a large area cannot cover what happens at

a PTA meeting at a suburban school, but the local paper can. It does, and it is read.

Arthur H. Rice, Jr. notes (*Michigan Education Journal*, January, 1966) the strong preference of education reporters for contacting local sources for education information. Their five favorites, says Rice, are the local superintendent of schools, the president of the local school board, public school principals (elementary and secondary), and the local administrator in charge of school public relations.

Readers seem to respond favorably to the local approach. In a Dayton suburb, almost a quarter of the people were found to rely on their local paper for news about education. In contrast, thirteen percent relied on the metropolitan papers for the same news.

If metropolitan papers are sometimes one-upped at their own game, one can easily see the competitive difficulties for TV, with its expensive camera crews and tightly scheduled programming requirements. Local coverage is not its forte, nor that of radio.

Public radio and television are working to close that gap. Cable television has even more potential. But right now, even though the public uses all three mass media concurrently, it relies most on newspapers.

So, taking into consideration their basic news orientation and the space they have to work with, staff to

do the work, the medium's relatively low cost (compared to TV, for example) of producing the work, and their ubiquity, newspapers are the ones.

Steven H. Chaffee, in the *Journalism Quarterly* (Winter 1967) asked what that really means:

"On the one hand, it might be concluded that -- as the public sees it -- the mass media, especially newspapers, are doing an excellent job in reporting to the public . . . a second possible conclusion [is] that the newspaper is the best of a bad lot of agencies of school-citizen communication, and that the mass media as a whole are simply no worse than the others. The best estimate of the situation probably lies somewhere between these two interpretations. Few would claim that the media could not do a better job of reporting education, and the broadcast media obviously leave something desired. But the newspaper is providing the public with more school information than any other source, and the mass media seem to be perceived as more neutral information sources than other agencies."

A brief history of newspaper coverage of education seems to indicate a spiraling effort to do this job -- to provide the public with more education information.

In his article, "Newsmen and Schoolmen: the State and Problems of Education Reporting," (*Journalism Quarterly*, Summer, 1967), George Gerbner gives a capsule history of education reporting.

According to Gerbner, "specialized coverage of education news began with the advent of *Time* magazine in 1923. *Newsweek's* education department followed 15 years later."

The New York Times hired the first education reporter in 1937. Then, "through the postwar rise in concern,

attention, and controversy, education emerged as more than only a local service feature," says Gerbner.

The Education Writers Association, a group of working newsmen, was organized in 1947. The late forties and early fifties is the time when education reporting is generally considered to have "professionalized." Sputnik I in October, 1957, added more impetus.

In 1955, nearly half of fifty-two major metropolitan dailies across the country reported an education or school beat assignment. Ten years later, nine out of ten of the same group of papers reported such an assignment.

Who carries out this assignment? Gerbner describes the average reporter on the school beat:

"[He] is an earnest and hard-working newsman. He is impressed with the significance of his assignment even if still somewhat restive about his prestige in the newsroom. He receives more time and support to do a better job than 10 years ago but is still harassed and short-handed. He believes that his point of view, which is generally that of his management, represents the approach of the majority of lay citizens and taxpayers -- or at least of those who 'count.'"

Despite its predominance in the field of education reporting, the newspaper is not without its weaknesses. Ironically, some of the factors which work in its favor also work against it.

Time -- and timing -- is one of these. We have seen that people turn to newspapers when they want more than headlines. But sometimes a headline -- a fast, capsuled

story -- is what is needed. Here the newspaper cannot begin to compete with radio and television. Live broadcasts can put news on the air virtually while it is happening. Video-tape is also speedier than deadlines and schedules of newspapers permit them to be. . . .

And the electronic media are not resting on speed. The growth of cable television -- with its amazing potential as a local medium -- will no doubt cut into this "local" territory currently covered only by newspapers.

Public television, through experimentation with mobile units and other concepts, is building its coverage of the education scene in ways unique to its capabilities.

Once again, McLuhan's warning cannot be ignored; in the electronic age kids watch TV before they read. We don't know how this may affect the way they gather information as they grow older.

The local approach emphasized by newspapers brings other disadvantages.

"If you depend on your local newspaper for information on education," wrote school publicists Gloria Dapper and Barbara Carter in the March 17, 1962 *Saturday Review*, "Chances are you have virtually no information or perspective on the major national issues in education and only the most fragmentary view of even the local school's picture."

Gerbner follows up with these collected observations on the dearth of national education news in newspapers:

"I doubt that the name of any educator in the nation is known to more than 2 or 3 per cent of all American,' one education writer observed. 'Few people can see beyond their local school board and the local property tax,' commented another. 'There is some dim awareness of state school officials, even less of the U.S. Office of Education.'"

Indeed, studies have shown that one parent out of four does not know the name of his child's teacher.

Arthur Rice, noting that most reporters rely primarily -- if not exclusively -- upon the wire services for the education stories emanating from state and national levels, further observes:

"Because of their attempts to cover a multiplicity of topics in a multiplicity of political and/or school districts, newspapers often are getting fractionalized reporting -- fractionalized political news, fractionalized education news, etc. Instead of having a number of different reporters covering a multiplicity of school districts, it is recommended that one reporter -- relieved of all other responsibilities -- be assigned to cover a given *topic* (e.g. education) for a larger geographic and/or political area."

Feedback is another weak area of education coverage in newspapers -- and the other mass media too -- according to Steven H. Chaffee. In his study, conducted with Richard Carter at Stanford, Chaffee asked people how effective they thought newspapers have been in giving the local schools an idea of what the public is thinking about the schools.

Thirty-eight percent of those polled picked newspapers as most helpful in a feedback function, compared to fifty-nine percent who said newspapers were most helpful in their function of informing the public. The other comparative figures were:

TV: 31 percent said it informed the public well;
22 percent said it performed feedback function well.

Radio: 32 percent on informing public; 23 percent
on feedback.

School board: 29 percent informing public; 30 percent
feedback.

Parents' organization: 36 percent informing public;
37 percent feedback.

Chaffee thinks the mass media should improve in this
area:

"If there is one clear deficiency in media coverage of education, as the public sees it, it is in the feedback to schools of information about the public. The mass media in the U.S. have traditionally ignored this kind of communication to public policy makers, except on the editorial page. If, as some have suggested, the school system is the 'last bastion of local democracy,' however, the press might well consider giving more attention to this feedback function, perhaps equal to its present level of coverage of schools."

In his study of the feedback function, Chaffee also found what he calls "the relative preference of the well educated for direct contact with schools, and of the less educated for the mass media."

"To the limited extent that the mass media provide feedback to the schools, they evidently help to bridge a social gap between many citizens and school personnel," said Chaffee.

Finally, among the mass media, there is evidence ("How to Communicate with the Poor for Better Education," NSPRA) that the poor and other minorities prefer radio and television over newspapers. This preference seems to rise as their economic state declines.

A recent Dayton study bears this out. The pollsters there examined two areas with populations at low socio-economic levels. In one, a "poor, black" area, almost one third of the population did not get a newspaper. In the "poor, white" section, more than a quarter did not get a paper (compared to fifteen percent of the general population who did not get a paper).

Rice states that "the social groups to which each person belongs will influence his chances of being exposed to any message or media campaign, his perception and interpretation of the content, and its impact upon him."

Indications are that the best way to reach the poor is not through the newspaper, but through the electronic media.

B. Radio and Television

1. Introduction

Today there is a television set in more than nine out of ten American homes. It is watched four to six hours a day. In addition, one or two persons in a typical family listen to the radio about two hours a day. In fact, Gordon McCloskey notes in his book, *Education and Public Understanding*,

that the radio audience is bigger than ever, and the radio news audience even exceeds that of television between the hours of 6 a.m. and 6 p.m.

Thus, in the average household, more time is spent watching TV and listening to the radio than in reading the newspaper.

Why, then, do the electronic media rank below newspapers as a source of information about education?

Some aspects of the nature of radio and TV already have been treated under the newspaper section. Below is a more specific account.

2. Quantity

The average television fare is about seventy-five percent entertainment, twenty-five percent news. Most networks rank their programs as does NBC, where Mimi Hoffmeyer of the Program Analysis Department says that twenty-five percent includes all educational, cultural, and informational programs. This means that only a portion of that twenty-five percent -- and probably a small portion, since "news" includes large blocks of time like that given to the Today Show -- is devoted to education programming -- to things like documentaries about educational issues and problems.

It would thus appear that one reason people don't watch TV for information about education is that TV doesn't provide much.

This is only partially true, says Bert Briller of the Television Information Office. Briller says TV "covers" education in indirect ways which are not counted in the usual statistics on programming.

"Who can measure the impact of an interview with an educator or an education author on the 'Today Show'?" says Briller. "How much does a person learn about education by watching 'Room 222' or the 'Bill Cosby Show'?"

Discussion shows like "Issues and Answers" or "Meet the Press" sometimes cover an education topic; talk shows feature educators or education issues. The educational potential of these shows helps to blur the line between "news/entertainment," and makes it hard to say how much and how well television does cover education.

Others say television does not do well by education, either directly or indirectly.

"Television has done very little in a systematic way on education for the general public," says George Hall, director of Research and Development for the National Association of Educational Broadcasters.

"There used to be once-a-week programs by school systems on some networks," says Hall, "but as the mass audience of television grew and TV programming became more sophisticated and advertising more predominant, such programs were abandoned."

Frank Norwood of the Joint Council on Educational Telecommunications has his own theory about the low number of education broadcasts. "A study of the open school makes a fine story for the Sunday magazine section," he said, "but it's not so easy to broadcast. Education is cognitive; it isn't the kind of thing a broadcaster thinks about covering on the evening news."

3. Quality

How education issues are presented on television -- and radio -- is just as important as the fact that they're being presented, says George Hall of the NAEB.

Hall says TV originally failed in its attempt to cover education because "the programs were poorly managed, pompous in approach and generally uninspired."

Hall recalled a typical show was a PTA president or school board chairman lecturing panels for fifteen to thirty minutes.

There have been spotty "successes" in television and radio coverage of education; shows that were well received and thought to be good. Hall recounted some:

- * The Monitor approach has worked on radio: a school board member or educator talking for three or four minutes about a specific educational issue.
- * A Washington, D.C., radio station did a telephone call-in show on the Hansen track system which

generated a lot of give and take.

- * A Washington, D.C., television station did a variation of a community meeting on the Passow Report; the station invited teachers, parents, students, and school board members to the studio to talk about the report. They also took phone calls.
- * An Erie, Pa. television station regularly broadcast school board meetings, emphasizing feedback to the board members before the next meeting. The program changed the whole nature of the meetings.

Hall thinks format is thus responsible for the success or failure of education programs on radio and television. He points out, "In every case of success, the material involved has served as a stimulus which initiates response from the viewers or participants. If the receiver is left passive, it fails."

The difference, says Hall, is between a lively discussion on busing or an address from a PTA president on the subject of "Citizenship and the Importance of Integration."

Communications theorist Joseph Klapper would agree with Hall's analysis of the air waves' potential. Klapper says: "Radio and television, and particularly television, are able to provide their audiences with a sense of participation, personal access and 'reality' which approximate face-to-face contact."

It appears that when TV and radio use this innate potential to its best advantage, their successes can be great. When they ignore it, the resulting dullness becomes even more exaggerated than it would in print.

Dr. Gordon McCloskey points out another area of importance in the electronic media's coverage of education":

"Most people depend heavily on television and radio for entertainment. While viewing and listening are largely passive, to a large degree what is seen and heard quickly become subjects of conversation in family circles, on the job, and in social groups."

So radio and TV, with their "up front," headline approach, often serve as a first step in person-to-person contact -- the kind of contact communications theorists say is most likely to evoke opinion and attitude change.

4. Limitations

It has been pointed out that radio and TV at their best can be excellent. But given the twenty-five percent allotment of time to news in general, and the even smaller fallout to education programs in particular, it seems apparent that radio and television are not ready to produce the daily fare on education that the public requires.

Bert Briller of the Television Information Office admits this. "TV is not the best routine information," says Briller, "and there is a haphazard quality to television coverage of education. I like to think of it as a diffusion rather

than a concentration approach."

But when John Doe wants to know what happened at the school board meeting last night, he needs the concentration of hard, daily coverage.

TV may also be endangering its potential clout as an opinion-maker by staying out of the daily coverage game.

Communications expert Klapper points out that "mass communication is most efficient at creating opinions among people who were not previously inclined one way or another on the issue in question."

It is possible that by the time the networks get around to doing a documentary on a controversial education issue, people have already talked about it and formed opinions locally. The documentary may do little more than reinforce the opinions people already have.

Since more than eighty percent of American households receive newspapers, we can assume that there is no information gap created by TV's failure in this daily approach. But the people who watch television most are black, poor, or female, said a recent Louis Harris poll. And the people who most often do not receive newspapers, according to a Dayton study, are poor and black. So leaving it to the newspapers means ignoring certain segments of the population.

As with newspapers, the local angle figures largely here. A recent Roper Poll conducted for the Television Information Office reveals that as the focus of an issue becomes more local, newspapers are relied on more by the general public.

On state-level issues, the public tends to balance their ratings of TV and newspapers, and on national issues television rates ahead of newspapers on coverage.

It is impossible for national TV and radio networks to do any in-depth coverage of local events. But local stations are experimenting with education programs already. Public television -- which should feel free of the ratings game -- is doing programs, and cable television is on the way.

Theodora Sklover, a communications consultant with Open Channel in New York City, says: "The constructive use of television as an information system rather than exclusively as an entertainment medium becomes more and more possible as the miles of cable are laid throughout this country. . . . We can now address a small geographic area with television in a manner similar to the way that a local newspaper speaks to a small community. This will open the doors for local communities to look to their television sets for the type of local information they could previously receive only in print form, or occasionally on the radio."

C. Personal Contact Between School and Home

1. Introduction

Although personal contact with neighbors, children, and peers is considered to be a better source of information

about schools than personal contact with school personnel themselves, the latter still ranks high on the public's list of sources.

The most common communications in this area are parent-teacher conferences, usually at school, sometimes at home; and the interaction between school people and parents at school functions, such as an informal Science Day or a formal PTA meeting.

There are many other ways that school officials attempt to communicate with parents: school newsletters that go home, specific information campaigns waged through the mass media, specially called meetings or specially formed councils.

More and more, schools have been recognizing the need to inform and persuade the public; they have hired more communications specialists and public relations persons as school staff members.

More facilities are available; administrators and teachers interested in communications can utilize the public communication services of the National Education Association, for example. Also affiliated with the NEA is the National School Public Relations Association, which sponsors local, state, and regional workshops for would-be communicators and publishes a raft of how-to-do-it materials.

But parent-teacher conferences and PTA meetings, or their equivalent, are still the old reliable methods for

reaching most parents, and the fact that the NEA and NSPRA publish booklets devoted to understanding those techniques alone ("Working with Parents: A Guide for Classroom Teachers and Other Educators," and "Conference Time for Parents and Teachers") attest to their importance.

2. Parent-teacher conferences

Talking about the teacher's public communication role, author Gordon McCloskey says:

"Nothing a superintendent, principal, reporter or commentator says can create so much public understanding and support as good teaching and teachers' efforts to maintain cooperative working relationships with parents and community groups. And, if teaching is inadequate or if teachers' work is misunderstood by pupils, parents, or communities, no explanations by administrators or mass media can maintain public confidence in schooling."

Teachers as communicators have two major factors working in their favor. Because of their number, they comprise the largest part of a school system's public communication resources. And parents are especially interested in talking with them because teachers work directly with their children.

In fact, Gallup polls have recorded that teachers are held in high esteem by the public. And, according to communications expert Joseph T. Klapper, "Sources which the audience holds in high esteem appear to facilitate persuasion . . . audiences have been shown, for example, to respond particularly well to specific sources because they considered

them of high prestige, highly credible, expert, trustworthy, close to themselves, or just plain likeable."

Handbooks advise teachers to capitalize on their strong points in conference with parents, but not to overplay them: "Don't rush the interview Be willing to agree with parents whenever possible. . . . Don't take notes while talking with parents."

On the other hand, author-parent Ellen Lurie gives conference advice to parents in her recent book, *How to Change the Schools*: "More time . . . more privacy decide what things the school will do and what things the parents will do."

It is difficult to find any fault with the potential of the parent-teacher conference, supported as it is by sound communication theory.

Such a meeting is two-way communication, which all theorists agree is more accurate and effective than one-way communication; and it is person-to-person contact, a prerequisite to most changes of opinion. In addition, the largest number of parents can be included in this way; parents who would come to school when invited individually, but would be less likely to attend a PTA meeting.

Here is Gordon McCloskey on the subject:

"A growing number of teachers are supplementing, or supplanting, written reports with parent-teacher conferences, which when well planned and conducted, are more effective than any form of written evaluation. The word 'conference' connotes a situation and relationship which is warmer and more cooperative than

'report.' A conference invitation, if considerately worded, indicates an interest in a child, recognition of his parents' role in his education, and respect for the parents' right to be consulted about his schooling."

In fact, the main difficulty with the parent-teacher conference may be the teacher himself. Some are reluctant to use parent-teacher conferences because they think too much time and effort are required. Some object, saying they are teachers, not publicity agents; that education is too complicated for the untrained to understand and too time-consuming to explain.

In response, proponents of the conference approach emphasize that adequate support of schools and the effectiveness of education depends on public understanding; that there are things parents want to know that only teachers can tell them.

Some reluctance about the conference is demonstrated by parents who look upon a visit to school as an answer to a summons -- it has to be bad. Some are uneasy and uncomfortable with their children's teachers. Here again, conference supporters point out the heavy advantages of parent-teacher meetings.

Gordon McCloskey, for example: ". . . present evidence . . . indicates that people best understand matters with which they have frequent firsthand experience. Direct experience has a stronger impact on the senses and conveys more meaning than spoken or written words, which are at

best only symbols of experience. One visit to a classroom makes a stronger impression, creates more understanding, and develops stronger personal relationships than many letters or news reports."

Finally, home visits are encouraged as an alternative. Some teachers indicate that by visiting a home they can learn a lot about a child's background which can be helpful in the classroom and which parents would not necessarily mention in a visit to school.

The booklet "Working with Parents" cautions that "a home visit is not as simple as it sounds in many situations." A teacher must step delicately into the personal lives of his students and their parents.

Today, with the changes wrought by urbanization in general, the home visit, when it occurs, probably is considered more a first step toward involving parents in their children's school activities -- a step to be followed up by parents visiting the school.

3. School Meetings: An Example

The PTA is the traditional forum through which parents as a group have voiced their feelings about schools and, in turn, learned what is happening in schools. The latter function is the one that concerns us here.

There are numerous ways in which parent groups can meet with teacher groups. Among them, McCloskey says,

"The PTA has demonstrated viability. Other lay school organizations come and go; the PTA remains."

The PTA's total membership is about eight million, one third of the parents who have children in school. Not all its members are active; studies show that mothers of children in grades 1-6 are most active. McCloskey points out that membership seldom includes a sizable portion of the middle-aged and elderly men who hold first and second-level positions in the community power structure.

The PTA's inherent strength grows out of the parent-teacher relationship, multiplied. It has a history of dependability.

Critics point out, however, that educators can depend on it too much; they emphasize its limitations and warn that overdependence on the PTA could result in inadequate contact with many citizens not represented by the body. The same could apply to any other citizen group.

Communications research tells us that people tend to adopt opinions which correspond with those of their associates. They tend to join groups which espouse goals and methods with which they agree.

Berelson and Steiner go on to indicate: "On matters involving group norms, the more attached people are to the group, or the more active they are within it, the more their membership determines their response to communications."

So it becomes important to know the make-up of various groups, in order to understand how certain information being conveyed is being presented and accepted. For example, as indicated earlier, middle-aged and older men who are community leaders do not get information about education from PTA meetings. They don't attend. Further, they are probably not influenced much by those who do attend -- mostly mothers of elementary school children. These women are not likely to be their associates, members of their "opinion community," peers who influence them.

Beyond the straight communication of information, groups are important as opinion-making and opinion-changing forums. In the area of persuasion, it is important to stimulate discussion which might create more rational opinion, and to crystallize group opinion.

Here we enter another area: How and when do people use the information they receive? Communications theory holds that people usually act on the opinions they have formed or reinforced through person-to-person contact. When do they act on those opinions? And how, then, can this knowledge be useful to a Coalition which seeks to effect educational change? These issues and others are examined in the following sections.

VI. Analysis of Communication Failures

As evidence from the exploratory developmental activities in Jacksonville, Baltimore, Chicago, Dayton, and elsewhere began to build, and as the insights obtained from our examination of the major communication media began to take form, we were in a position to analyze existing communication failures as a prelude to the formulation of a plan for the Coalition. We reasoned that if the purpose of the Coalition was to improve educational communication, with a view toward facilitating desirable change, it was necessary to first distinguish between "what was" and "what could be." This analysis was begun during the third month of the planning period and is still in progress. Preliminary findings were reported in the Interim Report; some of these are repeated here, in the interest of a lucid explanation. We intend to continue our analysis of communication failures during the foreseeable future. However, we believe that our present understanding of the problems is sufficient to warrant the preliminary design of the Coalition's operation. The nature of human progress is such that the solution of one problem very often, in time, generates new problems. As a result, it is probable that the Coalition will need to maintain a continuous analysis of communication failures, even after some of the corrective activities have been launched. Only in this way, seemingly, can improvements

systematically take place.

The Community

For the largest of the target audiences -- the citizenry at large -- there are at least partial answers to the questions of which media they use and which they find most influential and satisfactory. Of the various media available for informing people about what is happening in schools, newspapers clearly are both most influential and most widely used. The poverty-stricken are the single major exception. Perhaps because of the correlation between poverty and literacy, the very poor tend to rely upon radio and television for their educational news.

Beyond these generalizations, however, there are a number of secondary implications of greater significance to the Coalition's purpose. For one thing, parents of post-school age children generally are disinterested in the schools. Apart from the political elements, involving dollar support and other election issues, information about the educational system tends to be ignored. Despite this lack of interest, nonetheless, taxpayers who do not have children in the schools are not without their opinions. The dwindling confidence in schooling serves as an illustration. A poll conducted by the National Association of Broadcasters revealed that "the pattern of public disenchantment with school performance over a twelve-year span shows that the

greatest drop in confidence has come during the past two years." It seems reasonable for the Coalition to assume, consequently, that while the attitudes of the general public are not insignificant, it is the parents of children in school who constitute the most interested, and perhaps most important, audience.

The potential of radio and television for invoking a sense of audience participation is significant in this connection. If one of the chief obstacles to effective educational communication is the audience's lack of interest, communications programs which help to create greater involvement are obviously desirable. In short, making useful information available is necessary but insufficient; because audience attention is voluntary, the more important obligation would seem to be that of baiting -- in whatever way possible -- greater public interest in educational issues. Our Chicago project on environmental education, as a case in point, makes use of simultaneous programming for children and their parents. Maneuvers of this sort reflecting a calculated effort to lure public attention, appear to offer considerable advantage.

It is important to note, in this same regard, that there does not seem to be any adequate definition of what "public understanding of education" means. The Coalition's staff, for instance, is still seeking to determine what knowledge about the schools is of most worth to the public.

What the public is interested in, unhappily, is not the only criterion which should be considered. The public's information is highly uneven; parents, for instance, are likely to know far more about fire drills than about the mathematics curricula. Moreover, the opportunity to learn about education is variable: people in large cities and in rural areas, for example, know far less about their schools than those in large towns and small cities. And, as one might expect, the parents of children in school have a somewhat better opportunity -- and somewhat greater incentive -- to become knowledgeable.

The perceived communication dissatisfactions of this more concerned segment of the citizenry suggest other inferences. Although parents are reasonably well informed about school activities, they are ill-informed about the education process itself. People want more information about what they think of as "modern education" -- teaching methods and materials which differ from those they experienced themselves as children. They are unaware of many innovations which have been adopted during the past decade, and in the cases of those of which they are aware, they neither understand the method nor the purpose. The concept of individualized instruction, discussed at considerable length in the professional literature for the past fifteen years, is still an enigma to the general public. The more esoteric changes in curriculum, grading, and school organization are even

more incomprehensible. The 1970 Gallup study on public attitudes toward schools reads as follows:

The public has an appetite for more information about the schools and what they are doing or trying to do. If the schools hope to avoid financial difficulties in the years ahead, they need to give far greater attention to this task of informing the public. It isn't simply a matter of selling present policies. Public relations is a two-way street. It is important to tell the public about the schools, but it is also incumbent upon the schools to listen to the public's views and, after serious examination, to take steps to meet just criticisms.

Two points are thus abundantly clear: First, the interested public wants and needs a variety of information that presently is not provided by the various communication media. Second, for both pragmatic and psychological reasons, people resent communication that is one-sided. This point, reinforced throughout the report, has assumed particular importance in the reasoning of the Coalition staff. True communication requires that there be an authentic dialogue that permits people to both give and receive the viewpoints of others. Not only does such an exchange clarify misunderstanding and fill informational gaps, it also breeds involvement and ultimately commitment. It is therefore as important for the Coalition to ascertain what people think, believe, and feel as to inform them about the convictions of the profession itself.

It is worthy of mention that we have thus far been unable to resolve an important matter: on the one hand,

people seemingly are antagonistic to communications which are deliberately biased, and on the other, they express a preference for "editorialized" messages; it may be that the public merely wants propaganda labeled for what it is, or it may be that the Coalition's present evidence is inaccurate.

It is also clear, from the research reported in the previous section, that format is crucial. If indeed it is true that communication is a failure when the receiver is left passive, it behooves us to either restrict our communications to ideas which are inherently provocative, and -- in the cases of those which do not have this inherent characteristic -- to make them so. In our Jacksonville project, illustratively, we plan to provoke public interest through out-and-out controversy. Where the educational ideas to be communicated are not debatable in themselves, we plan to play up the contradictory ways in which the public perceives their meaning.

Questions regarding the education of the young lend themselves easily to prejudice; there is, consequently, a compelling urge on the part of those who produce and distribute communications to "act out" personal convictions. But if care is taken to guarantee a balanced presentation so that opposing notions are fairly represented, "editorialized" messages might convey varied points of view more

effectively than "objective" ones. Objectivity, thus, becomes a function of balance rather than of neutrality. The Coalition might, then, achieve neutrality in the treatment of issues not by avoiding biased points of view but, instead, by communicating a variety of biases and insuring that all points of view on an issue were fairly represented.

As communication vehicles, it would appear that public radio and TV are ripe areas for the Coalition's work. Their willingness to cater to the public's interests and needs, coupled with their dedication to advancing the social good, are strong assets. Whereas commercial TV must be approached indirectly, through attempts to incorporate reliable facts about education in the existing format and program interests, public TV and radio can be approached directly and helped to fill their "public interest" time with more lively, provocative, and informative programs.

There also is reason to be sanguine about the Coalition's capacity to work with the local and national press. Both education reporters and editorial writers are interested in educational issues. Understandably, they are inclined to restrict themselves to stories which have high reader interest. Even so, they display a commendable willingness to aid the cause, helping to inform the public about more prosaic and mundane matters.

The Professionals

Apart from the mechanisms designed to get at target audiences within the general public, other strategies must be created with which to cope with the communication needs of audiences within the organized profession itself. In the case of school board members, superintendents, teachers, and others within the fraternity, the crucial objective is the dissemination of information which will spur significant change. However, this objective generates an even more fundamental question: What is the relationship of communication to change?

Clearly, practitioners cannot introduce innovations about which they are unaware. Yet knowledge itself is not enough. School officials know of the existence of many successful innovations which they are unwilling to introduce. In fact it probably is safe to generalize that no school superintendent -- because of political and economic realities -- will introduce an improvement on the basis of its virtue alone. The cost may be prohibitive, the change may set in motion other undesirable consequences, lack of public sophistication may create insurmountable opposition, and so on. As an operating principle, then, it may be stated that communication is an important but partial requirement for change.

It is vital, in this regard, that the Coalition recognize what it can, and cannot, hope to accomplish.

The purposes of education will never become a matter of common agreement. Communication alone will never convince all people to accept similar convictions about education; a plurality of viewpoints -- both as to the goals of education and the methods by which they are best accomplished -- is inevitable. Similarly, to aspire toward a communications program that would influence all citizens is optimism beyond reason. It has already become apparent in our Dayton venture, for example, that a vast number of citizens simply have no interest in the schools. The parent-teacher conferences and PTA meetings, referred to in Section V, maintain their potency precisely because they are directed toward those citizens who do have a strong vested interest in schooling. As a working principle, therefore, it clearly would be the better part of valor to concentrate the major communications efforts at the concerned sector of the society, and, of even greater importance, to make abundant use of the opinion leaders' influence within these sectors. For the society at large, our best hope is to perpetuate a greater tolerance for diversity in educational philosophy.

School leaders are rarely insensitive to the expectations and desires of the dominant political groups in their communities. It is only the demands of the politically unpowerful segments of the population that may be unheeded. Because of this tendency on the part of school men to respond sensitively to pressures from the influential public,

the Coalition may be in a position to perform a useful service by encouraging the mass media systems to sharpen the general public's understanding of, and appetite for, useful education changes. The potency of informed public opinion exerting innovating demands upon its school administrators could conceivably create a greater springboard to change than any communication efforts channeled through the internal professional networks.

And, to touch upon a related point, there is some reason to believe that the public has become weary of false promises regarding the miracles to be derived from change. The movement for rapid innovation in the schools is now a decade old. While, in instances, these changes have represented brilliant departures from tradition, many other innovations have been relatively prosaic. Often, school administrators have perpetuated changes which give the impression of progressiveness although, in reality, they are little more than a new arrangement of the same old and tired shibboleths. The public's faith in the new has thus been somewhat diminished.

Much of the trouble seems to stem from the profession's failure to distinguish between public relations and communications designed to genuinely inform people about significant educational issues. As was suggested earlier in the report, schools tend to rely predominantly upon

parent-teacher conferences. Additionally, some use is made of school newsletters and citizens councils. Unfortunately, however, these procedures do not solicit the interest of a wider spectrum of the public, and they normally deal with school activities rather than with major educational problems. Indeed, most school public relations campaigns work to obscure problems and issues rather than to illuminate them.

Our Dayton investigations show that the critical elements of the community are inclined to regard school-sponsored communication messages with considerable skepticism. Generally speaking, the public regards the mass media as a more reliable source of information. Although most of the mass media are supportive of schools and education, they are prone to emphasize and, upon occasion, invent controversies. Roughly two percent of newspaper space, for example, is devoted to the schools. Half of this space, moreover, is devoted to athletics. Newspapers, and to an extent the media in general, are aimed at general public interests. They do not, therefore, give particular attention to the information interests of parents and other concerned citizens. As a result, there seems to be little congruence between what interested citizens want to know (information about curriculum, school management, finances, and pupil achievement) and what the media wish to communicate. Significant research findings go unreported, except for

extraordinary and dramatic departures from convention; innovations and experimental developments are unpublicized; and educational issues -- of far greater importance to the welfare of the society than most of the public realizes -- are touched upon only circumspectly. As a consequence, informal citizen communication in the form of person-to-person interaction is a melange of conjecture, opinion, and misinformation. Our early results in Dayton confirm Coleman's well-known finding that informal communication serves, mostly, to direct public attention on the trivial, and to confuse the public.

Of all the target audiences examined by the Coalition staff, the answers to the analytical questions regarding the effectiveness of the preferred communications system are most clearly apparent in the case of professional groups. There have been a vast number of studies on the dissemination process, including several excellent studies sponsored by the National Center for Educational Communication. An extended discussion of the substance here would amount to little more than a restatement of what is already well known. It suffices to say that the existing communications systems seem to do a reasonably effective job of familiarizing school personnel with available new programs. Although the dissemination of conclusions emanating from research studies is somewhat more problematic, disinterest is a greater impediment to the utilization of

scientific knowledge than ignorance. And, when all is said and done, schools tend to emulate one another in the adoption of innovations. A superintendent is most likely to learn about a new practice through personal communication with another superintendent, and of even greater importance, to base his rejection or acceptance of the prospective change on the experiences of others. It suffices to say, therefore, that there is little reason to support the Coalition's participation in the dissemination about educational research and development. Exceptions may occur from time to time, but in general it would seem more appropriate for the Coalition to assist the existing systems to operate more effectively rather than to duplicate their efforts.

In view of these circumstances, and in view of the scant attention which seemingly has been paid to informing the general public about desirable educational change, it would appear that the Coalition might profitably give strong consideration to the possibility of mounting synchronized communication projects involving the simultaneous dissemination of information to the professionals and various sectors of the lay public.

Finally, we indicated, in our earlier Interim Report, that informal communication was a promising device for increasing the public's understanding of education. We have since concluded, however, that while interpersonal communication has tremendous potential, it does not occur .

as a matter of course. The Dayton and Jacksonville projects, for example, already suggest that the unplanned flow of information from person to person is not systematic, predictable, or orderly. The flow seems to occur through random and haphazard contact, depending upon who talks to whom, and it is heavily subservient, also, to the interest factor; that is, people seem only to talk about the educational problems that concern them most, concerns which may range from the color of the senior class ring to the desirability of instruction on Communism. When interpersonal communication does take place, the benefits are extremely impressive; it now seems extremely important, however, to provide a planned structure so that public interaction is not left to chance, and so that important issues, rather than trivial ones, command people's attention.

Furthermore, as Katz's psychological studies on communication have demonstrated, the way in which a person interprets a message is affected by two sets of factors: (1) their cognitive set, and (2) motivational need. In most circumstances, we interpret a message largely on the basis of what we already know. Thus, prejudice, misinformation, and misconception all serve as filters for new information, permitting us to retain the comfort of our existing biases. And, we tend to see in information what we are looking for; if our psychological bent demands an optimistic outlook, we

interpret the message as favorable; if, on the other hand, we need to confirm our sense of depression, we interpret the same message as a foreboding of bad things to come. People seek and accept information that is congenial with their existing attitudes. The familiar bit of whimsy to the effect that "don't burden me with the facts, I've already made up my mind," seems, in short, to be more true than funny.

VII. Theoretical Constructs: The Way to Go

The three preceding sections have described a series of developmental activities, an appraisal of the strength and weakness of present communication media, and an analysis of the more pervasive communication failures. Out of these three pursuits, we have distilled a number of theoretical notions. We believe these are essential to the Coalition's ultimate life style. The list is both incomplete and temporary. As our work goes on, we anticipate that new notions will be added and some old ones modified. They are set forth here, not as any sort of gospel, but as a summary of our present understanding of the problems. They seem to us to have reasonable validity, but we would be reluctant to defend them in debate; as we learn more we anticipate that they will be restructured again and again. If, in the meantime, they constitute a model on which we can solicit criticism and improvement, they will have served us well. The theoretical notions are listed numerically, without any particular categorization, and without being ordered according to importance. Nonetheless, taken collectively, they provide the superstructure for the organizing activities and the plan described later in the report.

1. *Successful communication, at least for the purposes of the Coalition, is communication that evokes sufficiently*

sustained action to implement beneficial change.

2. One-way and two-way communication are both useful, but they serve different functions. One-way communication serves to inform; two-way communication serves to clarify and to enhance understanding.

3. In view of the Coalition's aims, chiefly that of perpetuating desirable educational change through better communications, two-way communication activities offer a considerable advantage.

4. Information in and of itself may not encourage people to make enlightened decisions about the ways in which they will and will not act.

5. The way in which people perceive and interpret and respond to a communicated message is influenced by their motives, experiences, and the degree of their interest in the subject. Accordingly, the design and transmittal of messages (encoding) must take these factors into account.

6. The effect of a message is partially determined by its quantity and intensity, but people also avoid, question, reject, or accept a message for reasons that are not yet fully understood.

7. Most people seek information which confirms their existing state of mind, rather than information which creates the need to change.

8. The overall communication process (encoding-transmitting-interpreting information) has both quantitative

and qualitative dimensions. Access to new facts and concepts does encourage people to acquire further insights. And well-informed people generally have more insight, capability, and opportunity than people who are poorly informed. However, the qualitative emotional processes by which people avoid, seek, and utilize information to justify their behavior are integral elements of a well-planned communications campaign.

9. All of education's different publics are regularly exposed to thousands of messages which frequently conflict with one another. The human need to cope with and process this overabundance of information causes people to set up "interference devices." As they make the information output manageable, however, these interference devices cause us to overlook, ignore, and distort useful information. It is therefore imperative for the Coalition to learn more about the function of such interference mechanisms, and to take them into account in the planning of communications activities.

10. The probability that a communication message, whether transmitted through print, radio, television, or film, will be misinterpreted, or that the purposes of the sender will be viewed with suspicion, are always good. Moreover, it seems likely that the same message must, for maximum communication effect, be encoded in different ways for different audiences. Consequently, a continuing analysis

of the effectiveness of its communications activities is essential to the Coalition's ultimate accomplishment.

11. Most people do not respond to the information conveyed through the mass media in isolation from other people. Media messages which seem to be important or consequential are discussed in informal conversation with friends, family, and professional associates. This "checking out" process usually occurs over a considerable time span, involving days, weeks, and even years. In this way, initial interests are either reinforced, diluted, or irradiated. Many initial responses, for example, are forgotten within minutes.

12. Some communication messages activate curiosity. Others focus attention on a perceived need or a possible benefit. The former evokes slight, if any, purposeful action. The latter, in contrast, can generate large amounts of sustained behavioral change.

13. Of the many forms of communication, conversation, discussion, and participation in group enterprise are the communication activities which are most likely to produce opinion change and impel a desire to act.

14. Communication which generates participation is particularly effective. Involvement not only gives the individual a sense of identification with a mutual effort, but it nurtures the feeling that change is possible. This sense of potential tends to motivate unified action. In turn, unified action perpetuates the desire to act.

Participation in a group enterprise, geared toward constructive change, is most productive when it is based on relevant information and directed toward a specific purpose. Aimless, ill-informed participation may confuse the issues and destroy the participants' sense of motivation. It follows, therefore, that effective communication must be directed toward a specified intent, and, whenever possible, be linked to some form of user participation.

15. Discontent and controversy are useful points of departure in planning communication activities. A discontented audience is more prone to action than a complacent one. When communications sponsor informed controversy, allowing people to express their dissatisfactions, constructive consideration of the underlying issues is promoted. However, when controversy and discontent are played upon needlessly, without soliciting group participation and focusing upon desirable change, they create a negative and divisive force.

16. In communications campaigns aimed at constructive educational change, it is helpful to organize follow-up activities, within the target audience, which necessitate group discussion of message content. These follow-up activities help the communicator to become more sensitive to people's reactions, to become aware of misconceptions and misinterpretations, and to sense inherent dissatisfactions with the message. These insights are helpful in improving subsequent communications activities.

VIII: Organizing Activities: Seeds for a Plan

All that has been described thus far is in the way of predicting the Coalition's probable life success. We have endeavored, through these various procedures, to estimate whether or not the environment was conducive to the Coalition's survival. The prospects, we are pleased to note, are optimistic; the environment seems hospitable. The existing media networks have indicated a strong desire to cooperate in the Coalition's aims; the manufacturers of educational knowledge, workers in research and development, have pledged their support; and, of greatest importance, we have localized significant communication needs among education's diverse target audiences.

Accordingly, we have, in the last few weeks, begun to examine a number of ways to shape the Coalition. We have been seeking seeds for a Coalition plan. The critical question, in this connection, has to do with the Coalition's personality and work style. In our Interim Report, we outlined these as follows:

More than anything else, this work style is based upon the conviction that it is the *net* rather than the *gross* product of communications that is crucial. Put another way, while a considerable amount of communications activity is currently taking place, it is not the activities themselves but the consequences that are important. In short, communications which do not aid the cause are better left undone. It is for this reason that the Coalition will seek to facilitate the accomplishments of other agencies rather than to replicate their efforts.

Reduced to its essence, the Coalition's functions will be threefold:

First, the Coalition will operate as a catalyst, exploiting the resources of existing communications systems to better advantage, creating new vehicles for cooperative endeavor, overcoming the perceptible fragmentation which now exists, and striving for a better yield from the investment of communications energy.

Second, the Coalition will -- through collaboration with existing communications systems -- engineer a greater public awareness of the pros and cons of significant educational issues. Restricting itself to those kinds of issues which are central to the nation's education of its citizens, the Coalition will attempt to familiarize the various segments of the population with the consequences of alternative educational policies -- maintaining to the largest possible degree a position of complete objectivity, and attempting through diverse, flexible, and imaginative tactics to make use of the communications media which the particular audience finds most convenient and effective.

Third, the Coalition will communicate valid and essential information about education to target audiences with special knowledge needs that now go unmet. Again using the resources of existing communications agencies, and again working strenuously to avoid replication and redundancy, it will organize and disseminate honest information in the most easily comprehended form. Beginning with local, state, and federal legislators, and then moving on to other consumers, it will try to overcome -- through the development of new and different processes and products -- egregious gaps in the present communications programs.

Our schools badly need some demonstrable successes. As the Coalition pursues the three above goals, it must endeavor to do whatever is possible that will restore the public's confidence in its school system. The old proverb which notes that the bad is more newsworthy than the good undoubtedly is operative. Yet, it should be possible to bring some of education's undeniable and impressive accomplishments to the attention of a public which is now preoccupied with failure

and with a scapegoat for momentous failures elsewhere in the society. A statement by Sidney Marland, Jr., United States Commissioner of Education, sets the tone for this aspect of the Coalition's work: 'Ours is the greatest educational system ever devised. But it falls short of our aspirations. We must improve it.'

It seems reasonable to assume that the American people will make an intelligent response to an honest presentation of education's strengths and weaknesses. Because there is much that is good as well as some that is bad, we need not fear an honest recital of the facts and a straightforward exposure of the issues. To do otherwise would be to destroy the Coalition's integrity and to impede useful educational change, since institutions do not become strong and healthy by ignoring their shortcomings. Thus, the Coalition's integrity will of necessity be its greatest virtue.

Given this life philosophy, we have launched a search, still in process, for the essential seeds. In addition to liaison with media networks and educational research agencies, we have continued investigations, detailed in our earlier Interim Report, with particular target audiences. Various segments of the general public; local, state, and federal legislators; and ethnic minority groups, vitally interested in education as a vehicle for obtaining first-class citizenship, remain as our most viable target consumers. The Coalition's capability for serving as a broker which encourages and facilitates cooperative interaction among these groups would appear to be outstanding. Consequently, we presently are engaged in the organization of a series of cooperative activities which will bring the producers, the disseminators, and the consumers of information into an effective partnership.

A search for other, more elusive, seeds is also under way. These have to do, chiefly, with the Coalition's need to make a useful contribution to the overcoming of communication lapses, and, at the same time, to become a self-supporting entity. Three prospective avenues of approach are being considered.

First, we are exploring the possibility of distributing a series of multi-media information "packages" to interested groups among the general public. We anticipate that school boards, PTA organizations, and ad hoc citizens groups are all likely consumer prospects. These packages, perhaps offered in a sequence of twelve monthly deliveries, would deal with a current educational issue. Thus, one package might deal with segregation, another with busing, still another with teacher tenure, and so on. While the potential format is not yet firm, the typical package might contain a film-clip, an audio cassette, a film strip, twenty-five or so printer brochures, a leader's manual, and similar components. To assess the feasibility of such a venture, we are currently analyzing (1) probable production costs in variable quantities, (2) probable consumer interest, and (3) the use of other organizations for the production, storage, and distribution of the package.

Second, we are making serious inquiries into the possibility of an earlier aspiration -- the mounting of a national, synchronized, communication campaign on a

definitive issue. We would like to plan a campaign dealing with, say, school finance -- for national exposure -- in which all of the major media would lend their efforts to a cooperative venture. In March of 1973, for example, articles on the financing of the public schools might appear in a variety of popular magazines. At the same time, a television documentary, summarizing the problem and the alternative solutions, might be broadcast on commercial and public television. Radio personalities, serving as hosts for "talk shows," might also be persuaded to treat the topic during the same period. Finally, making use of indirect communication apparatus, we might encourage newspaper columnists, TV script writers of dramatic weekly shows, and a variety of other indirect communication resources to touch upon the topic during the campaign. The Coalition team is engaged in an investigation of various resources which might be used in such a campaign. To illustrate, it is possible that business and industrial firms could be persuaded to contribute to the venture in the form of manpower, material resources, and money. In addition, on a matching basis, philanthropic foundations might also be willing to contribute. There is reason to believe, we think, that given a significant issue of widespread interest to the general public, a vast number of agencies and resources could be brought into play in arranging such a synchronized effort.

Third, without view toward ultimate format, we are exploring the possibility of coordinating the existing resources for disseminating new knowledge about education to all potential target audiences. These explorations entail a complicated process of planning a mechanism, from beginning to end, that will (a) utilize existing resources and agencies in an efficient manner, (b) identify new -- yet unexploited -- resources, and harness these to the ones which now operate, and (c) coordinate the old and new communication resources into communication activities which capitalize upon new theoretical understandings of the communication process. What all this means, in plain language, is that the Coalition wishes to explore the possibilities of going at the communication process in an entirely different way. Utilizing the existing communication networks, the present resources for educational research, and communication devices which have never before been brought into play, we wish to experiment with a new kind of communication system. Our efforts in this regard are prompted largely by the receipt of a grant from the Kettering Foundation, reflecting the Foundation's belief that programs for educating the public about education have not yet been brought to a high art form.

The activities envisioned will necessitate a number of sequential steps which include, among others:

1. Creating devices for identifying significant research;
2. Creating devices for interpreting significant research;
3. Creating mechanisms for casting interpreted research in multi-media formats;
4. Devising systems, utilizing the resources of public television and other production centers, for producing the multi-media formats;
5. Devising procedures for ensuring hardware compatability;
6. Establishing procedures for storing the software and hardware components;
7. Establishing procedures for distributing the materials;
8. Establishing methods of identifying consumer needs;
9. Establishing procedures for cost-sharing and profit-sharing among the contributing organizations and agencies.

The goal is challenging, perhaps prohibitively so. Nonetheless, we feel that even failure might be constructive in that our efforts should illuminate new ways of communicating with the public on educational issues. Accordingly, ad

hoc Coalition teams are now exploring each of the nine operations indicated above. It is our hope that their results, coupled with the other activities described earlier, will provide a seed supply that, carefully nurtured, will make a permanent, self-supporting Coalition a reality.

IX. A Plan for a Coalition

What remains, at this point, is the need to outline a preliminary plan for the Coalition's future. After a considerable amount of deliberation, the Coalition's staff has concluded that a multi-dimensional format is required. We believe that while there are a number of significant contributions the Coalition can make, it would be best to view each cluster of activities as a discrete program. These programs overlap and share a number of common mechanisms; nonetheless, a diversified organizational approach offers several conspicuous advantages: the management of personnel and resources is simplified; the overall contribution of the Coalition is broadened; as the Coalition develops, useful programs can be enlarged and useless ones abandoned; and, above all, a broad spectrum of activity increases the likelihood that the Coalition can be self-correcting as it plots its own future.

The plan we suggest, consequently, really consists of four sub-plans. Each represents a specific programmatic approach to reducing a communication failure, and each helps to improve the public's understanding of education. Since the programs are separate entities, each must have its own set of blueprints, its own target ambitions, and its own evaluation scheme. The four sub-plans are described below.

A. Service Operations

The projects we envision as "service operations" are essentially an extension of the kinds of activities described earlier in the report. They are designed chiefly to afford the Coalition an opportunity to increase its understanding of the communication process. The service operations represent brokerage endeavors. They will facilitate the accomplishment of a major Coalition goal: increasing the amount of cooperative interaction among the producers, distributors and consumers of educational information.

As is the case with those activities now underway-- in Dayton, Jacksonville, Chicago, and elsewhere--we believe that a service operation should be created whenever a good opportunity presents itself. As the Coalition matures, particular communication problems will become evident from time to time. As these problems emerge, the Coalition should --where circumstances warrant--fashion an appropriate project. Four criteria should be used to determine the suitability of potential projects: (a) the existence of a communication problem which cannot be dealt with by some other agency; (b) the presence of reasonable opportunity to conduct field research which will enlarge the Coalition's technical knowledge; (c) the opportunity to involve various members of the Coalition cooperatively; and (d) the availability of prerequisite funds.

In sum, the service operations constitute an ongoing cycle of short-term projects, each of which will serve the public good and expand the Coalition's range of service.

B. Synchronized Communications Missions

The synchronized dissemination campaigns, each based upon a pervasive educational issue, constitute a second set of projects. In our judgment, the benefits to be derived from these projects are sufficient to warrant their being considered as a specific operational phase. The synchronized campaigns, described in the previous section, involve the mounting of synchronized projects which will result in the simultaneous dissemination of information to the profession and to various sectors of the lay public.

These synchronized communications missions give promise of making a distinct contribution to the Coalition's repertory. They should create an excellent mechanism through which to coordinate the communication maneuvers which result from the Coalition's research efforts. And because of their multi-lateral and multi-media complexions, it is likely that they will do much to reduce the fragmentation inherent in many dissemination programs. Finally, they will help to meet a fundamental requirement of good

dissemination methodology: the generation of cumulative momentum. It seems likely, in other words, that the effect of a synchronized mission will be that of causing a great number of people across different segments of society to think about and discuss--both informally and formally--an educational issue. The sheer mass of attention should do much to engender substantially increased public interest. Thus the ubiquitous problem of coping with the public's selective attention should be somewhat relieved.

As matters presently stand, we are convinced that it would be wise to create a Coalition team, managed by a project team leader, for each synchronized communications mission that is undertaken. This team, consisting of three to five individuals, would plan, implement and evaluate the mission, managing its affairs from inception to completion. We suspect, moreover, that the ability to procure dollar support for the mission will be a substantive indication of its worth. The necessary support should derive from a variety of sources: it should be possible, for example, to persuade philanthropic foundations to underwrite a portion of the cost; business and industrial corporations might contribute personnel and/or material resources; on a shared-cost basis, the government itself might be willing to meet a portion of the overhead.

Of greatest import, however, our early explorations lead us to believe that the major media networks in radio, television and the press will--in the national interest--lend their support to the cause. All of this is to say that, given an issue of significance, a broad reservoir of public and private resources can be tapped, increasing to a considerable extent the feasibility of the synchronized communications missions. A Coalition team presently is preparing to test the extent of such support on the issue of school finance. The degree of the team's success should provide a useful barometer to future endeavors.

C. Communication Packages

The third set of projects, the development of multi-media communication packages, involves the major components of producing and distributing vital information. As suggested in the preceding section, we presently conceive of these packages as a series of issue-oriented, monthly productions. Our projected plans remain tentative because our feasibility assessment is not yet complete. Much depends, obviously, on the degree of consumer interest, the willingness of Coalition members to participate in the production, storage and distribution of the packages, and the market factors.

Should this facet of the Coalition's program prove workable, it would be desirable to assign permanent, non-rotating staff to the project. This staff would work cooperatively with the membership alliance in establishing the production and distribution procedures. Given reasonable consumer interest, the various elements of the delivery system could be sub-contracted with the Coalition membership, as well as with other, outside agencies. Our preliminary market research indicates that the success of the venture will depend predominantly upon several factors: (a) our ability to tailor the content to specific audience interest, or our ability to encourage new consumer interests; (b) our ability to provide useful information in ways more convenient than those which presently exist; and (c) our ability to deliver the packages at an exceptionally favorable price.

In contrast to the service operations and the synchronized communications missions, the multi-media packages must pay their own way. It seems clear, for example, that the possibilities for subsidizing these kinds of projects are exceedingly limited. All depends, consequently, on our capacity to "sell" a desirable product for a modest cost.

We are continuing our projected planning of the multi-media packages. Once our forecasting data is in,

and our analysis complete, a "go/no-go" decision will be made on this sub-plan.

D. New Ways

It would be beneficial, we believe, to explore new ways of carrying out the communication process. Indeed, it is the very failure to explore innovative approaches that in large measure gave rise to the Coalition's existence. Our interest in pursuing experimentation with new ways stems from an abiding conviction that our present mechanisms are too prosaic and too deferential to custom and tradition.

It was noted in the preceding section that the primary objective in these projects is to identify new yet unexploited resources, and to conjoin these with those now in use.

Accordingly, those projects designated as "new ways" must, of necessity, be exploratory and imaginative. Thus, the Coalition must be willing to undergo a very real risk of occasional failure and occasional success. Unless high-risk ventures are undertaken, however, the point of these projects will be lost. When the final chapter in the Coalition's history is written, it may be that breakthroughs in the communication process, resulting from

projects in search of new ways, may well prove to be the Coalition's most distinguished achievement.

On page 91 of this report, nine activities are set forth. We believe that it would be useful to mount experimental projects in each of these nine areas. The projects should be small-scale, and conceived synergistically; that is, they should be regarded as pieces of a puzzle which eventually will be patterned together into a systematic whole. As noted earlier, preliminary investigations in the nine areas are now in process. These, we believe, create a satisfactory platform on which to mount further experimentation.

Specific Planning Recommendations

1. *The Coalition should maintain a small, flexible staff. New personnel should be engaged as new and specific missions are launched.*

2. *In the immediate future, the Coalition should continue to strive for low visibility. In time, as the Coalition's record becomes public knowledge, greater visibility will emerge as a matter of course.*

3. *During the immediate future, the Coalition should launch projects in each of the four areas described in the report. These projects, to the largest possible*

extent, should emphasize the collaborative cooperation of the producers, distributors and consumers of educational information.

4. At an early point, the Coalition should create a National Advisory Board. This board, composed of prestigious personages, should meet yearly, review the Coalition's activities, and make recommendations to its governing council.

5. At an early date, the governing council should expand its membership from five to nine. New appointees should reflect a cross-section of racial and social sub-cultures. Also, it is important that the additional appointees be representative of outside educational agencies without a strong vested interest in communications.

6. Efforts to expand the Coalition alliances--working arrangements with the producers and distributors of communications media--should commence immediately.

7. Efforts to expand the Coalition's membership should also begin immediately. To the extent possible, the new members should increase the diversity of the Coalition's scope, providing personnel resources and organizational contacts not now available.

8. As a means of announcing its purpose and intent, the Coalition should give thought to hosting a national conference on educational communications. This conference, rather than functioning as yet another convention, should attack the most pressing communications problems with which we now are confronted. Scholars and other experts should be invited to prepare formal papers, each directed toward a specified problem. Following the conference, the conclusions emanating from the aggregate papers should be widely shared with members of the communications industry.

9. The Coalition should continue to solicit both sustaining funds and project grants. In addition, as new projects are created, efforts to secure support in the form of personnel and material contributions should be maintained.

10. As new projects are initiated, efforts should be made to emphasize several facets of the communication process which offer great potential. These include: the use of dialogue, feedback mechanisms, and other forms of two-way communication; focus upon specified target audiences such as legislators and school boards; and the use of a three-phase approach--a preparation phase in which a critical problem is illuminated, a communication phase

in which alternative solutions to the problem are disseminated, and a follow-up phase in which the receivers of the communication are obliged to use their new knowledge in an actual decision-making task.

11. Transition from short-term to long-term goals should occur gradually.

12. As operational projects and missions are begun, the Coalition should maintain a continuous program of field research and "theory-building."

13. Efforts to study copyright factors, to promote standardization of display and production devices, and to organize new forms of storage and delivery should continue.

14. Continued collaboration with the National Center for Educational Research and Development, the dominant leadership agency in educational communications, should be sustained.

15. As new research and development programs are formed within the profession, early liaison with these programs should be established. Thereafter, the Coalition should attempt to inform the public of experimental new projects; this information should be transmitted (a)

during the planning stage, (b) during the development stage, and (c) during the evaluative stage, after research and development are concluded. Such an approach will do much to reduce the gap between theory and practice, and the "innovative lag."

X. A Projected Time Schedule

December, 1971 - Incorporation.

January, 1972 - Expansion of Policy Council.

January, 1972 - Creation of National Advisory Board.

January - June, 1972 - Solicitation of Additional Sustaining Funds.

January, 1972 - January 1973 - Initiation of New Projects.

January, 1972 - January 1973 - Initiation of "New Ways" Projects.

January, 1972 - January 1973 - Initiation of Additional Service Operations.

April, 1972 - National Conference on Educational Communications.

January, 1973 - Delivery of First Multi-Media Package (if feasibility is verified).

April, 1973 - Delivery of First Synchronized Campaign (if feasibility is verified).

XI. A Last Word

Human decisions are based upon both knowledge and feeling. After the hard evidence is in, the pros and cons weighed, and the data analyzed, there remains the intuitive hunch and other sensory perceptions which must also play a part in the decision. Throughout the report we have restricted ourselves to the facts of the matter. It therefore might be appropriate, in a last word, to comment upon our "sixth sense" feelings about the Coalition's future. The staff has discussed the venture with a vast number of knowledgeable and informed people. The end goal--achieving an educationally informed public--has been debated, formally and informally, in order to determine whether properly it is a viable reality or an unrealizable dream. It is not, after all, the number of problems or the magnitude of the obstacles which stand between human success or failure; rather, it is the desire and capacity to overcome the problems and circumvent the obstacles. It is not crisis--but the way in which we respond to the crisis--that stands between oblivion and survival.

All things considered, we are exceedingly sanguine. There are, to be sure, many difficulties to resolve. Nonetheless, both the importance of the Coalition's mission and the probability of eventual success are grounds for

considerable optimism. It would seem, in sum, that the Coalition's ends are worthwhile, and that the ends can be matched with appropriate means. Inferring from both logic and feeling, consequently, we are heavily encouraged to press onward.